Domestic violence against Asian women in Leicestershire 2005

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
AGAINST
ASIAN WOMEN
IN
LEICESTERSHIRE
2005
BY
REZIA BEGUM
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the subjective experiences of Muslim and Hindu women in Leicestershire who have suffered domestic violence. It is based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with ten Asian women and self-completion questionnaires completed by sixty women victims living in refuges. The guiding research questions are: age, marital status, religion, identity of the abuser, period of the abuse, forms of abuse, involvement of the police, family member awareness, agencies approached for help, frequency of medical assistance, state of mind of the abuser, thoughts of leaving and reasons for not doing so.

The study also investigates support organisations in Leicestershire and looks at the services provided for women victims. Eleven support organisations were interviewed using semi-structured interview methods.

The study makes use of both Primary and Secondary data. Primary data include semi-structured interviews and self-completion questionnaires. Secondary data are drawn from books and recent journal articles dealing with domestic violence against Asian women in the UK. Statistical reports from a variety of organisations are also used.
INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is a world-wide phenomenon and has been the subject of international research. In every country of the world women are being subjected to domestic violence behind closed doors. The root cause of violence against women is men's need to control. Many women suffer years of verbal and mental abuse resulting in long term psychological damage. Abuse can take the form of continual harassment, humiliation, sexual abuse, verbal abuse or emotional abuse.

In situations of domestic violence abroad, women can not access support agencies as they can in the UK. Although there are agencies which are designed to help the victims of domestic violence here in the UK, many women are unwilling to turn to the police, either because they are afraid of the embarrassment of having police calling at the house and the shameful domestic situation being exposed to neighbours or because they are terrified of suffering even worse violence at the hands of their partners. Fifty percent of the victims do tell someone else about their most recent assault, most often a friend, or relative. The police are the next most likely to hear of incidents, followed by hospital staff or GP’s.

As stated above many female victims of domestic violence do not seek help because they are afraid of retaliation from their spouse or intimate partner. They are often more frightened of leaving than they are of staying. A woman may not leave an abusive relationship because she believes that the
relationship is not bad enough. It may be that her partner has convinced her of this. In addition, the woman may not have the financial means or confidence to survive outside of the relationship.

Domestic violence is now a recognised problem amongst the Asian community living in Britain. This is the finding of a number of research papers published in criminology journals in recent years. Because of cultural restraints and interpretations of religious teachings together with language difficulties, abused Asian women do not seek help. This study will investigate domestic violence among the two most numerous Asian groups in Leicestershire – the Indian and the Bangladeshi. Most Asian women are reluctant to report this type of crime to the police because of feelings of shame and loyalty. Many Asian wives put up with violence for years without confiding in anyone, in order to protect their marriage and their family pride.

What is Domestic Violence?

The “Evaluation Of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts/ Fast Track System 2004” written by Dee Cook, Mandy Burton, Amanda Robinson, and Christine Vallely, defines domestic violence as “Any criminal offence arising out of physical, sexual, psychological emotional or financial abuse by the person against a current or former partner in a close relationship, or against a current or former family member.” (Cook et al. 2004: 20) The Home Office Research Study 276: Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault And Stalking: Findings From The British Crime Survey, defines domestic abuse as: “Any violence between current or former partners in an intimate relationship, wherever and whenever the
violence occurs. The violence may include physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse.” (Walby & Allen, 2004: 4)

Domestic violence against Asian women is mostly committed by their husbands, fathers, brothers and fathers in-law but also frequently by mothers in-law and sisters in-law. It happens because most Asian women have been taught from a very young age that women should not speak loudly or speak above their husbands or elders. It is commonly held that Asian women also should not be more highly educated than their spouse, even if they are better educated then they are still expected to agree with whatever opinions or decisions their husband makes. In many Asian communities around the world and also in the UK most women are not treated equally by their husband’s family or even their own families. Most of these women have faced domestic violence for many years during their married life. Because it is very well know that women should not speak above their husbands many women are controlled by their husbands. These women also do not know their legal rights due to being not well educated or having no knowledge of the English language.

Most Asian women, especially Muslims, are brought up with the idea that after marriage their husbands are more important than their parents also a married woman will need her husband’s permission to see her parents or even to go out to town.” As a Bangladeshi Muslim brought up in the UK I have come across many Asian people who say that “Once you are married your parents have no right interfering in your married life even if you are having problems with your husband or his family.
You will need to be just patient and live with it.”

The focus of this study is domestic violence against Asian women in Leicestershire, (both Muslim and Hindu). This includes Bangladeshi women some of whom were married in Bangladesh when they were only 13 years of age. Now in their mid forties, these women were brought to England by their husbands. Most of them have not been educated; rather they have been brought up helping their mothers with the housework or looking after their younger brothers and sisters. It is the case that in other Asian countries too, women are not educated to a high degree or treated in the same way as men.

Although in Britain today, many Asian women are being subjected to domestic violence during their married life, for many reasons they are not speaking out. This research will investigate the extent of domestic violence that Asian women face in particular parts of Leicestershire and discover what support is available to them.
CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Literature review will look at Islamic literature, where the teachings of the Qur’an are explained and also at research findings about domestic violence against Asian women in the U.K.

The literature shows that the situation of a number of Asian women in this country is far from ideal. It is, in reality, contrary to the Declaration of Human Rights, as expressed below.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 1 states that: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”

(O’Byrne, 2003: 399)

"I only wish women to have power...over themselves"

(Tess Cosslett, Allison Easton & Penny Summerfield, 1996: 13)

"too many woman in too many countries"
Speak the same language of silence

There must be freedom if we are to speak
And yes, there must be power if we are to be heard
And when we have both freedom and power let us not be misunderstood"

(Jill Mclean Taylor, Carol Gilligan & Amy M Sullivan, 1995: 1)

Many women from all social backgrounds face domestic violence. Mullender (1996) found that domestic violence against women affects every age and background: “We’ve had a woman of seventy four in our refuge... we’ve had a girl of sixteen, both disabled and able-bodied, black and white, lesbian and straight, and across all social economic classes. It seems to go straight across the board from all walks of life”. (Mullender, 1996: 31)

Violence against Asian women is widespread. Gill and Rehman (2004) states “that one in four women have experienced domestic violence some time during their lives and that violence against women and children has serious consequences for their physical and mental health.” This makes them more vulnerable to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and other mental-health difficulties. Both Aisha Gill and Gulshun Rehman have also stated “that violence against women is an enduring fact and an institutionalised form of male domination in many South Asian societies.” (Gill & Rehman, 2004: 75)
What the Qur'an says about Muslim Women's Rights:

Many Muslim women face barriers because of their own religion and culture. There are many myths attributed to Islam, suggesting that women have no rights and that women should be patient and live with violent husbands no matter what. But in fact the Qur'an gives women many rights to stand up for themselves.

The Qur'an states that a woman has been given extensive legal rights to obtain separation from a husband who is cruel. Islam gives woman the right to equality under the law: "she is regarded as an individual legal personality and not a mere adjunct of her husband or father." (Sheriff, 1989: 13)

The Qur'an also says: “Treat your women kindly” (verse: 4:19)

The prophet also has stated that “Paradise lies at the feet of the mother” (Sheriff, 1989: 9)

He stated that “The best among you are those who are good to their wives. If the husband abuses his authority the wife reserves every right to have recourse to the law” (Maududi, 1972: 151)

The Qur'an has given the right to women to be educated. The Prophet has emphasized the importance of education for both male and female. A woman who is not educated according to Nawar Al-Hassan Galley (2003) does not know her rights and is not conscious of herself. She states that “educated women are first more conscious of themselves and of what they have achieved and, second more
gender conscious than their illiterate sisters." (Al-Hassan, 2003: 100) This text shows the comparison between the position of educated and uneducated Muslim women. Al-Hassan concluded that women who are not well educated are not aware of their own rights and so they are more likely to be victimised.

The Prophet made it clear that parents should not discriminate against girls unfairly in favour of their sons. He said “Whoever has a daughter and did not bury her alive, nor insult her nor favour his son over her, Allah will enter him into Paradise” (Sheriff, 1989: 6)

The teachings of Islam are, however modified by culture. Afshar (1984) found that The Qur’an does give women more rights than those granted by the law or custom in many Muslim countries. The Qur’an sees women as “independent individuals responsible for their beliefs and actions, good or bad, who are rewarded accordingly.” (Afshar, 1984: 247) Afshar (1998) states in a more recent Journal article that many Muslim males also have a problem with women's rights, “It is neither because of the Koran, nor the Prophet, nor the Islamic tradition, but simply because of those rights conflict with the interests of the male elite.” (Afshar, 1998: 6)

Asian women are taught to worship their husbands by many elderly people who promote stereotypes. No religion however says that you should treat your wife like an animal. Asian women who are not aware of them selves or don’t understand their religious scriptures are misled by such stereotypical
models. Mullender (1996: 52) interviewed an Indian woman whose response was “The culture into which I was born and where I grew up sees the woman as the honour of the house...In order to uphold this false ‘honour’ and glory she is taught to endure many kinds of oppression and pain in silence. Religion also teaches her that her husband is her god and fulfilling his every desire is her religious duty. For ten years I tried wholeheartedly to fulfil the duties endorsed by religion. For ten years I lived a life of beatings and degradation and no one noticed.” (Mullender, 1996: 52)

Muslim women are often brought up with stereotypical notions of their husbands’ superiority and importance. In Bangladesh or other Muslim countries women are fed a myth suggesting that “A woman’s heaven is under her husband’s feet”. Unfortunately many women still live by this type of myth, even though their husbands physically and mentally abuse them. Leghorn and Parker (1981: 168), found that also in China women are taught the same myth that “The marriage you are going to enter requires you to respect your husband’s family.” Equally an Indian wife is not supposed to defend herself verbally to her husband and her in-laws. (Leghorn & Parker, 1981: 168)

Asian women stay in a violent relationship for many years thinking that their husbands will change. But in many cases the men don’t change. Lupton and Gillespie (1994) found that many Asian women regardless of where they were born and brought up, still think of marriage as being important and express a long term commitment to their marriage. Some Asian women stay because they have children or are about to have children. “He might change if we have our own place. When the baby
arrives he’ll be different because of the child and I think that a child needs a father.” Some women
will stay until they have had enough. “I’ll spend the next years as I’ve spent the last fourteen. I don’t
intend to do anything until he pushes me too far.” (Lupton & Gillespie, 1994: 81)

Mai Yamani (1996) found that “The husband (brother, father...) is expected to control his wife. To
control means being aware of all her activities, knowing when she goes out and comes back, where
she goes, and who she meets. The relationship between the husband’s masculinity and his control over
his wife is not respected; he is not considered a real man, for his wife rules him.” (Yamani, 1996: 152)

Salma Choudry (1996) interviewed wives who were abused within the Pakistani community in
Newham. Fourteen women were interviewed in detail. Many women felt pressured in their marriage.
“The prospects for the Pakistani woman who leaves her marriage are extremely bleak, as her
respectability and personal honour are almost entirely dependent upon her marital status.” One
respondent described how she did not want to leave her violent husband because she felt “everyone in
the community would blame her for not being able to hold her marriage together.” (Choudry, 1996:
1-2) Many Asian women don’t leave their marriages because it will jeopardise their daughter’s
chances of finding a successful match. One Pakistani woman stated that “no one would marry her
daughters if their mother was a divorcee, and so she stayed with her violent husband to protect their
future.” (Choudry, 1996: 2) Other women who were interviewed have stated that when being beaten
or abused their mothers-in-law do nothing to stop violence. One woman recalls that “her
mother-in-law had watched her being beaten on a number of occasions, but had said and done nothing;” another claimed that her husband “started to beat her at explicit suggestion of his mother.” A couple of the women interviewed stated that they were “subjected to threats of violence directly from their mother-in-law and sister-in-law.” (Choudry, 1996: 2)

Salma Choudry pointed out some important key points when interviewing Pakistani women. Many Pakistani women felt that they “faced dishonour and rejection within their own community if their marriages failed – even if this was a result of domestic violence.” Pakistani women also did not understand English and were unaware of their rights. Salma also stated that “further work is required to increase knowledge about the extent and the nature of domestic violence within all minority ethnic communities and to evaluate the ability of relevant agencies to respond equally to the needs of all groups.” (Choudry, 1996: 1)

Many males within Muslim cultures do not approve of women speaking out. Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed (1987) state that “It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of houses as prisoners.” They also state that “women should have equal rights as males.” (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987: 7)

Twenty years later many Asian Muslim women find themselves in the same situations. Salmas findings show that this kind of violence is still going on and nothing has changed. Women are still not
allowed to stand up for themselves. Once a woman is married she is seen as her husband’s and his family’s property for ever and there is no going back “a woman has no say in any aspect of her life, including her own marriage, and once married she is forever her husband’s and her own family should not interfere in her life.” (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987: 21)

This is still a commonly held view in any Asian family’s. An Asian woman is mainly regarded as a visitor in her family’s house until she is married. “A woman is only a ‘visitor’ in her father’s family to be kept in trust until claimed and once she leaves her father’s home for that of her husband’s, a women is told that she enters it in a bridal suit, and will only emerge in her coffin.” (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987: 22-23) Mumtaz and Shaheed warn women “not to expect any moral or material support from their parental families after their marriage.” (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987: 24)

Lots of Asian women from a very young age are instructed in the myth that their only purpose in life is marriage. “Young girls go forward to marriage because they have no other dreams open to them and because all spinsters carry a stigma. Young girls are also taught that they shall have greater freedom after marriage. Once married, women look upon marriage as a sort of security because they have no real security.” A similar instruction given to them when they are young is that “a good wife is a self sacrificing person who suffers without complaint all the miseries imposed on her by her husband and in-laws.” (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987: 23-24) Many women have not been able to continue their education because “Education is never a priority for girls.” Many Asian parents don’t see the point in letting their daughters be educated because, once they are married, education will only
go to waste. Another reason for not educating daughters is that "parents are afraid that education will fill their daughter's heads with undesirable ideas, after reaching puberty girls are considered to be grown up and may start flirting with boys. (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987: 27-28) This kind of attitude to marriage teaches women not to look for any aspirations in life apart from her to thinking about their husband and in-laws. This is why so many Asian women can not move forward.

Ruksana Ayyub (2000) in her research found that Muslim immigrants from South Asia come with very strong cultural, religious beliefs and Islam plays a very important and positive role in the lives of Muslim immigrants. Ruksana also found that many Asian women deny that violence is going on in their homes. Domestic violence in the home affects the entire family if left untreated. (Ayyub, 2000: 237) Although Muslim women facing domestic violence are not reporting to the police they are instead turning to religion and families for help and support. Many women wanting to leave abusive husbands can find themselves alone and without family support. Ruksana found that though these women were educated and were working they still thought that they should go by their culture which is to sacrifice themselves to any violence, which is happening to them just to continue the marriage. "Women who experience violence in their lives are told to be patient and to give in. No clear stand is taken against men who are violent. Violence in marriage is generally condemned but when it does happen the religious community gives no clear consequences for the violent behaviour. If a woman also reports or tries to take any action against their husband's the community will condemn her. Rather her actions are considered as disloyal to the husband and the family." (Ayyub, 2000: 242)
If a woman brings dishonour it is shameful for the entire family, even distant relatives will experience shame. If a woman is living in a violent relationship she will not confide in anyone because, it will bring shame on her family. A woman or girl is regarded as decent if she looks after her family and her husband’s family without standing up for herself. “A traditional view of a decent and virtuous girl was one who walks slowly, never runs, never laughs out loud, and never ever takes care of her needs before that of the family.” (Ayyub, 2000: 244)

Aisha Gill (2003) Criminology Lecturer, has written many Journal articles stating the position of Asian women who face domestic violence in Britain. She has also interviewed many women. In her Journal article she states many Asian women who are victims of violence do not receive any support or assistance from their families because saving family honour. This is known as (IZZAT) which is the Urdu word for honour. This honour is translated as power and ensures the family a dominant place in the social hierarchy of the community. Aisha states that the concept of IZZAT, “is mainly incumbent upon women and increases the male or family honour. Any disgrace from the code, whether real or alleged, bears grave consequences for the woman.” (Gill, 2003: 42) Many women are at risk from non-family members who feel their honour has been undermined. “Maintaining honour requires constant effort by individuals and groups to avoid the state of shame (sharam) at all costs. It is important to note that what is honourable and worthy of izzat relates to the whole group and its social and economic standing.” (Gill, 2003: 43)
Aisha Gill (2004) in another Journal article interviewed twenty Asian women in London. She found that some women commit suicide or attempt to commit suicide so that they can get away from the violent relationship. There is no other way for them to get away from family pressure to keep the family honour. Aisha found that “In some Asian cultures, suicide may be viewed as a better alternative to remaining alive if it protects the family from shame, exposure or embarrassment.” (Gill, 2004: 36) An Asian woman who tried to commit suicide because she had had enough of violence for many years, tells her story. Daljit, who suffered physical and emotional abuse by her husband had felt lost as a result of violence, which made her feel worthless, and she just wanted to end her life. “I think that there was a part of me that wanted to die but I was too scared to do it myself. When he hit me I realised that I lost a loving feeling inside. I felt I brought shame upon myself and started to lose my confidence. He made me feel no good, so I thought about killing myself and started to lose my grip on reality. I would sit in the dark after he’d hit me and think about it.” (Gill, 2004: 37) In another case an Asian woman wanted to end her life after being subjected to abuse by her husband. Shirin attempted suicide to deal with her pain. Shirin says “I needed to find a way out. I was going crazy, isolated from everything. I didn’t want to exist anymore. I wanted to die. It was taking control of my body, which was being abused by others. It had got to the point where I was nothing, I gave him every thing and I was nothing.” (Gill, 2004: 38) Aisha has found that lack of support and the physical, emotional violence and isolation does lead women to attempt suicide or commit suicide. As Hoff writes “the association between violence from one’s spouse, low self-esteem, and suicidal tendencies is very strong, especially when compared to the women’s pre-battering life phase.” (Gill, 2004: 38)
In “Voicing The Silent Fear: South Asian Women’s Experiences Of Domestic Violence 2004” Gill found that Asian women are often “doubly victimised; first by the violence perpetrated against them by their partner, and then by society which often fails to provide them with appropriate kinds of support and interventions that would empower women from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups.” (Gill, 2004: 466) Gill’s research found that many Asian women did not understand the term domestic violence or that it was a criminal act. Many Asian women also did not understand English so she had to translate the word Domestic Violence. From her findings she found that women were shocked to know that they were victims of domestic violence. Women she interviewed stated that “I never knew I was a victim of domestic violence. When I realised I just cried. I just did not know.” (Gill, 2004: 470) Aisha also found from her interview that it was not just the husband who was violent towards his wife it was also the mother-in-law and the husband’s family who provoked violence. “Traditional family beliefs dictate that the daughter-in-law lives with her husband’s family and is expected to take on the responsibility of household chores and caring for the in-laws. In cases where in-laws were abusers, the violence was likely to be compounded further by the male relatives, namely the fathers-in-laws and uncles. However, it was the mothers-in-laws that usually provoked violence. (Gill, 2004: 471) Some women felt ashamed to be named as a victim of domestic violence. Women denied being a victim of domestic violence. One victim denied being abused “I didn’t really want to understand domestic violence. I’d heard about it about it happening to other Asian women but I did not want anyone to know it was happening to me. I was ashamed to be called a battered woman.”
Another woman expressed similar feelings, “it’s a question of maintaining an honourable appearance and saying to people that the marriage is good. But really I knew it was bad but was too scared to say.” (Gill, 2004: 474) These Asian women hardly understand their own rights. They should not feel shamed for being the victim of domestic violence. The perpetrator who is committing this type of criminal act should feel shame and people should understand that the women are not to be blamed because they have done nothing wrong. They are not the ones who commit terrible acts of violence. One victim survivor stated that a proper response to domestic violence is perceived in the Asian community as “you are expected to suffer in silence. You just keep it hidden behind closed doors and hope that it will go away. Getting the police involved is not really the done thing around here. You just go through it yourself.” (Gill, 2004: 479)

Similarly a Journal Report completed by Erica Burman, Sophie L, Smailes and Khatidja Chantler (2004) found that mainstream services and minorities communities recognised the pressure, which many women have. The needs of the family come first before individual needs. “An individual’s needs are often neglected … it’s very important to keep the appearance up with the family and the family together no matter what is going on.” (Burman et al, 2004: 337) Many organisations identified that many Asian women were encouraged to stay in their violent relationships for the sake of the children and their families and that “it was the family who would sort out and manage the abusive situation. (Burman et al, 2004: 337) Asian women themselves stated that many people think because many Asian women look happy that they are not in a violent situation. She states that “You get
judged straight away. People think that we don’t have those problems in our community… they didn’t expect it to be happening because we all look so happy, but behind closed doors a lot goes on.” (Burman et al, 2004: 337) Erica Burman and Khatidja Chantler (2005) in another Journal report found that many Asian women who come from abroad by marrying a British spouse and who are facing domestic violence from their husband and his family, find it extremely difficult because they are unaware of the services which provide help for women in this type of situation. Many women are blackmailed by their husband and his family not to mention to anyone about anything or they will be deported back to their countries, they also do not confide in anyone in case the police are involved and take away their passports “threats of deportation are used by perpetrators as a way of maintaining control within a relationship, it is also a mechanism that makes help-seeking particularly risky.” (Burman & Chantler, 2005: 66) The main difficulties for these Asian women are that “they have little access to relevant and appropriate information or knowledge of where to go for advice” also “the threat of being deported affects women in terms of exacerbating their distress and sense of insecurity and uncertainty.” (Burman & Chantler, 2005: 66) Many of these women also do not understand English and this creates more barriers for them. So many women who are afraid of deportation remain in violent relationships just to stay in Britain. Also Asian women who are married are stigmatized if the marriage does not work. A number of these women come from poorer families so their life back home will be bleak if they return in disgrace.

Steve Currell (1998) Chief Inspector of Essex Police, found that there are a lot of barriers preventing
Asian women from coming forward or reporting to the police such as “language, cultural differences and the fear of the authorities. As a result, there may be women who have experienced domestic violence and are not getting help or protection they need simply because the police and other agencies are not aware of the incidents.” (Currell, 1998: 24) Steve Currell also interviewed Asian women who were facing domestic violence from their husband and his family. He found that one particular woman who arrived in the UK after her marriage to a British Asian found herself being abused by her husband and his family. The family denied her any privacy. Her letters were opened without her consent, she was not allowed to do anything such as closing her bedroom door, even if she wanted to rest or undress. They also abused her for being a financial burden on them. She was suffering in silence and did not confide in anyone. She eventually reported it to the police and is now living with her auntie, worried that she may be deported back to India and worried that it will bring shame to her family abroad. (Currell, 1998: 24) Another interviewee was also subjected to violence for eleven years by her husband. She stated that her husband locked her out during the winter at night. Her husband also poured cleaning fluid over her head and whisky over her face for not cooking the way he wanted her to. While this woman was pregnant her husband physically, emotionally and sexually abused her. He also punched her in the stomach, which resulted in her going to hospital, but she still did not report this to the police. Currell’s findings were that “Asian women, whether they were victims of domestic violence or not, were unaware of the service and support available to them in the area in relation to domestic violence.” (Currell, 1998: 25)
Marianne R. Yoshioka, Louisa Gilbert, Nabila El-Bassel and Malahat Baig-Amin (2003) in their study found a similar pattern where many Asian women victims of domestic violence are not aware of the support which is available to them in this type of criminal act. In their study they found in regard to Asian battered women, that adherence to traditional gender roles was revealed as a barrier to help seeking. The researchers concluded that “women’s belief in the importance of being a good wife and a mother and their willingness to sacrifice personal autonomy, and freedom to adhere to these beliefs deeply, shaped their willingness to seek assistance from outside sources and/or leaving the relationship. Women reported that by seeking help about the abuse they feared they would be seen as too “westernised.” (Yoshioka et al, 2003: 172) Yoshioka too, found that many Asian women did not leave their marriages because “they did not want to compromise their family’s honour with a divorce and damage the image of their community.” (Yoshioka et al, 2003: 172)

On the whole Asian women who are victims of domestic violence are not aware of the support which they can receive from Social Services, Women’s Aid and other Support Agencies. Women who are aware of support are frightened to get involved just in case they are tracked down by the perpetrators. Those who seek support and are persuaded by the authority or family members to stay in the marriage may be at risk again. A Journal report conducted by Roisin Woolnough (2004) cites information by a co-ordinator at the Southall Black Sisters (SBS) Meena Patel. She states that “it is dangerous for social services or the police to talk women into going back home. She cites one case where the police began mediation proceedings in its domestic violence unit between an Asian woman and her
husband. They were left alone in a meeting room and he stabbed her to death.” (Woolnough, 2004: vii - viii)

The H M Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (2004) in a report states that “In recent years, the issue of domestic violence has periodically attained a high public and political profile – typically because of an outcry surrounding a particularly tragic case, sometimes because of a new research on the prevalence of domestic violence or difficulty in securing convictions, and occasionally because of the ‘celebrity status’ of a victim or perpetrator.” The report also outlines that “every minute, the police receive a domestic violence call, every day, thousands of children witness domestic violence, every week, two women are killed by a partner or ex-partner.” (H M Crown Prosecution, 2004: 2)

The role of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and of the Police is to respond to and initiate prosecution in cases of domestic violence. “The police gather evidence where it is believed that an offence has been committed, arrest and charge the alleged perpetrator and then pass the case file on to the CPS. The CJS Criminal Justice Service reviews the charges and the strength of the evidence in support of a prosecution, and where there is sufficient evidence, take the case to court.” Investigation and prosecution are linked together. Both CPS practices from the beginning to the end of the process look carefully at the “current police policy and practices and investigative quality, working relationship between the police and CPS, and liaison with local domestic violence organisations, focusing especially on measures that could increase the number of offenders brought to justice for
domestic violence, the care and treatment of victims and witnesses, the extent and causes of attrition, the application of the revised CPS Policy and accompanying Guidance, the Code for Crown Prosecutors and any relevant charging standards.” (H M Crown Prosecution, 2004: 3)

The Government’s policy is the “emphasis on the criminal nature of the offences of domestic violence and the aim to bring more offenders to justice. The Inspectorate team identified that there were 463 incidents to which the police were called, “there should have been approximately 260 crime reports with potential offenders. In the event, 118 crimes were actually recorded and charges were made in relation to 21%. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) file sample showed that typically 50% of those charged would be convicted (guilty plea or conviction contested hearing) that is to say 11% of those matters recorded as a crime led to a conviction. Whilst in some respect alarming, it should be recognised that positive police action at early stages may have stopped or prevented violence to the satisfaction of the victim, who in many instances did not want the matter to go further.” (H M Crown Prosecution, 2004: 5)

The Crown Prosecution Service has also identified that there is substantial evidence that domestic violence within the home, which is being committed on the carer, is causing tremendous harm to the children. The Crown Prosecution states that “this needs to be given high consideration by those police officers and prosecutors when deciding whether to arrest and charge or whether to continue with prosecutions respectively. (H M Crown Prosecution, 2004: 8) Many cases do not go to court for many reasons. These may be because victims are hoping that may be their relationship with the
offender will change or may because victims are too frightened if the offender does not get convicted. Many Asian women particularly will see it as shameful to report about her husband or his family. This kind of attitude leads many women not to report domestic violence to the police. However the Crown Prosecution Service have set a very clear target to deal with domestic violence cases. It is a matter of fact that women need to report and take the case to court. Domestic violence remains a crime which is under-reported.

Crime Concern (2000) in their article state that the reasons may be “fear of further or escalating violence should the victim report an incident, hopes that the relationship can be salvaged, mistrust of agencies, lack of knowledge about what agencies could do to help. (Crime Concern, 2000: 3) Crime Concern also says that support of victims of domestic violence will form an important local violence strategy which includes supporting victims to stay in their own home, e.g. through personal alarms, CCTV and security lighting, provision of emergency refuge and other temporary and move-on accommodation. Other measures could include advice, outreach and advocacy services to support women in their own homes, or in temporary or long-term alternative accommodation thus promoting effective use of civil remedies. (Crime Concern, 2000: 4)
Crime Concern also outline that strategies need to understand and respond to diverse needs within wider community e.g. black and minority ethnic groups, victims with disabilities, older victims, victims living in rural areas who do not have access to any services. (Crime Concern, 2000: 7)

The Crown Prosecution Service in a report conducted by Michelle M Dempsey (2004) states that “Stopping domestic violence and bringing perpetrators to justice must...be a priority for our society. We are determined to play our part by prosecuting cases effectively.” (Dempsey, 2004: 3) This shows that the Crown Prosecution Service is very eager to help victims to seek justice. Women themselves do not seek justice by not coming forward. The Crown Prosecution Service also found that victims frequently withdraw support from the prosecution. One councillor of the Crown Prosecution Service has given his view that “if you can reach a victim within 24 to 48 hours after the incident has occurred they’re far more likely to tell the truth. Given time and consideration, they have had contact with the abuser after that fact, perhaps the abuser’s family has called them or their own family has called them to talk them into changing their story.” (Dempsey, 2004: 26-27)

A Home Office research conducted by Alpa Parmar, Alice Sampson, and Alana Diamond (2005) states that many Asian women may face many barriers when trying to reach their social economic independence, and may face racism and prejudice when trying to access services and other resources. (Parmar et al, 2005: 2) Many Asian women do not seek help from any services because they are frightened of what people will say. This is because “when Asian women marry they implicitly
represent their family.” If an Asian women’s marriage is ended it is seen “as being the woman’s fault and she is also blamed for letting down the family’s honour. It is usually regarded as the woman’s duty in the family to maintain the family’s ‘izzat’ (honour).” (Parmar et al, 2005: 4) The Home Office also found that Asian women may face the pressure of an unknown immigration status which may prevent women from accessing any services for help and also that they are pressured by their husbands and in-laws threatening that they will be sent back abroad. Many women have had their passports taken away by their husband and his family. Parmar et al sees the confiscation of the women’s passport as “a practical and symbolic expression of control over her life and future.” (Parmar et al, 2005: 4)

According to this report Asian women generally preferred that service providers were themselves Asian and that they spoke their own particular language. Some women however, might not prefer service providers to be Asian just in case word gets around. Asian women who have escaped domestic violence have faced many barriers due to not understanding the English language e.g. “when I managed to escape from my husband I had no idea of life outside and didn’t know how to shop, how the currency worked, how to get to the children’s school, what and when there school holidays, what day of the week it was, how to use public transport, and how to communicate in English. I was completely helpless.” (Parmar et al, 2005: 4) The Home Office also found that many refuges and organisations are very unaware of the Asian culture and their needs. For example “An Asian had to leave her home without a change of clothes. The refuge she went to gave her dresses and
trousers to wear but she did not say anything, as she did not want to cause trouble or seem ungrateful.”
(Parmar et al, 2005: 6)

Much of the literature cited comes to the same conclusions regarding the position of Asian women suffering domestic violence in the UK. They face many barriers: lack of education, poor understanding of English, family and community pressure (the concept of IZZAT for example) and religious expectations based on myth. From a young age they are taught stereotypical notions of acceptable male and female behaviour. Unfortunately many women continue to live the stereotype even though their husbands abuse them physically and emotionally.
CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Interviewing victims of domestic violence

The subject of domestic violence is a very sensitive topic for women, particularly Asian women, as it is believed in their culture that domestic shame should not be made public. For that reason every step of the interview process needed careful preparation in order to get a reliable response. Considerations included contacting abused women via the right person or agency, explaining the purpose of the research, arranging an appropriate place and appropriate time to conduct the interview in order to afford maximum protection for the interviewees.

A semi-structured interview technique was employed to interview women who were and who still are facing domestic violence. Sensitivity to cultural background and expectations was a prime factor in conducting the interviews. The main purpose of this research is to understand and bring forward the experiences of abused Asian women living in the UK. In order to present this accurately, it was essential to observe and to listen to women’s true stories. The interviewer’s ability to speak Bengali and Hindi as well as English was of the greatest advantage in the interview situation. Being able to understand and reply to questions in their own language was the most natural way for the women to express their experiences and feelings.
Reason for choosing these questions

The reason for choosing these questions was to discover the nature and the extent of the violence against women, and women's response to violence. These aims were achieved through the semi-structured interview technique. (See Appendix 1 semi-structured interview questions for Asian Women) There were several aims of this research which the questions asked attempted to find answers to. These included:

1) to find out who was the perpetrator who was committing violence against women and further more to find out which relationship is the most likely to result in this type of violence.

2) to find out what forms the violence took and which were the commonest forms of violence.

3) to find out how long women have faced violence.

4) whether the interviewee had asked for help. Prompting possible sources of help gave more structure and depth to the answers. Otherwise they might simply give a one word answer and not expand on it.

5) to find out how aware the interviewee was of the help available.

6) whether these women had needed medical treatment as a result of physical violence.

7) why the perpetrator behaved in the way they did and

8) to attempt to discover if the victims had considered leaving the relationship and if so, why they had not done so.
Self-completion questionnaires was also devised and distributed via women's support agencies. (See Appendix 2 questionnaires for Asian Women) The questions were used to address the same aims as the semi-structured interview as it was intended that respondents would fill in the questionnaire themselves. Enough prompts were given to provide a range of possible answers as not every woman's experience would be identical.

**Achieving the purpose of the research through a self-completion questionnaire**

To collect information on domestic violence by self-completion questionnaire is another valid way of collecting data, because the victims may feel uncomfortable if interviewed face to face. The self-completion questionnaire allows the victim to fill in the questionnaire without giving personal details. She thus remains anonymous.

**Women from two cultures**

The Asian women interviewed were from two different backgrounds: Indian and Bangladeshi. Investigating women from two backgrounds gives a more rounded picture of the situation than focusing on just one. The cultures of the two countries are similar in that they are both patriarchal but have significant differences, for example the primary religion in India is Hinduism and in Bangladesh is Islam. The women had similar backgrounds in that they had little education, they all had arranged marriages and they were married at a young age, about 16 years old. One partner in each marriage was brought up in the UK and the other was born and brought up in India or Bangladesh. A man brought up in the UK would find his bride in Asia and return to the UK with his wife following later.
A woman brought up in the UK would be taken by her family to Asia, married, and then returned to the UK with her husband following later. A common feature for brides brought from India or Bangladesh was that they came to the UK whilst leaving the rest of their families behind. This made them feel lonely and isolated. The brides were from a rural background and found it difficult to adjust to town life. One noticeable difference between the Indian and the Bangladeshi women was that the Indian women went out to work whereas the Bangladeshi women did not. Another difference was in the extent of fluency in English. The women who had been brought up in India were more skilled in English speaking than those from Bangladesh and were more likely to attend English language classes once they arrived in the UK.

**Number of interviews**

Ten women were interviewed by semi-structured methods in order to gain a broader view of the difficulties faced. It would have been preferable to interview more women, perhaps 20, but it is difficult to find women who are willing to take part in this sort of research. Giving them a belief in me as a researcher was a vital first step, and an assurance of the confidentiality of the interviews. The fact that I myself am from the Asian (Bangladeshi) community helped me to gain the acceptance and confidence of the women who took part.
**Range of ages**

Interviewing women with a range of ages was useful because it helped to give an idea of whether problems with violence were present from the start of a marriage or whether the situation got worse or even improved over time. The youngest woman was 17 and the oldest 60.

**Number of questionnaires**

60 self-questionnaires were completed, as this was a large enough number to give a very rounded view of the current situation. 15 questionnaires were completed at each of three women’s refuges in Leicester and a further 15 at a woman’s refuge in Nottingham. I went personally with the questionnaires to ensure that they were completed and returned. Even with an anonymous questionnaire, the Asian women victims needed personal reassurance regarding confidentiality. They were interested in finding out about the purpose of my research and I found that they were pleased I had made the effort to meet them personally, and were more cooperative and shared more of their thoughts. Also, I was able to explain the questions in Bengali and Hindi, which was very helpful. The refuge worker was able to translate for those women who could not understand Bengali or Hindi.

**Semi-structured interviews with Support agencies**

A semi-structured interview was used to question support organisations in depth. All of the organizations contacted very kindly agreed to participate in my research. These were the Loughborough Police service (the Victim Liaison Officer - who deals with domestic violence)
Women's Aid (the manager and the outreach worker) the Victim Support manager, Social Services, the Domestic Violence Panel at John Storer House, a local GP, Charnwood Borough Council Officers (Housing and the Community Safety) Loughborough Job Centre, and a Charnwood Racial Equality Worker. The purpose of interviewing these organizations was to find out what services are provided, what they know about the situation of Asian women and the support women who face domestic violence in Leicestershire are offered. *(See Appendix 3 semi-structured interview questions for organisations)*

Some of the important factors in the methodology were, sensitivity to cultural background and expectations of the abused women, accuracy of findings achieved by the interviewer's ability to speak their language (which also put them at ease), while the semi-structured interview encouraged a detailed response. Self-completion questionnaires allowed participants to remain anonymous. Responses to both research methods indicated similarities and differences of experience. My own ethnic background helped in gaining acceptance. A range of support agencies took part giving information on services available and extent of knowledge and understanding of Asian culture.

Chapters three and four will investigate Primary and Secondary data.
CHAPTER 3

PRIMARY DATA FINDINGS

This chapter examines the findings of the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires undertaken with Asian women victims of domestic violence. It identifies the abuser, what form the abuse takes, how long the victims have been suffering the violence, whether the Police have been involved and, if not, why not. Other factors considered are, which members of the family are aware of the problems and what, if anything, they do to help, which support agencies the women have approached and if not, why not. Further questions identify how often the women have needed medical treatment, the state of mind of the perpetrator when abusing them, whether they have thought of leaving and if so, the reasons why they have not left. (See Appendix 4 Table of analysis from semi-structured interviews with Asian women victims, Appendix 5 Table of analysis from questionnaires for Asian women victims and Appendix 6 Semi-structured interview transcripts of Asian women victims)
This chapter also considers the work done by various support agencies who give information, advice and help to people in abusive relationships, the majority of whom are women. (See Appendix 7 Semi-structured interview transcripts of support organisations and Appendix 8 leaflets from support organisations)
Graphs showing results from both semi-structured interviews and self-completion questionnaires with Asian women victims

Semi-structured interviews with Asian women victims

**Age Of Abused Asian Women**

Amongst the ten interviewed women there was a wide age range, between 17 and 60 years. Most of the victims were in their 30s or 40s.
Eight of these abused women were still married. One was widowed and one divorced.

In this sample of ten women seven were Muslim and three Hindu.
All the women suffered abuse from their husbands and almost half of them also suffered abuse from their husbands’ family.
All the women suffered every category of abuse. One interviewee had also suffered sexual abuse.

The period of abuse was wide ranging - from 4 years to 45 years. Most of the women had suffered abuse for between ten and twenty years.
There was little difference between the number of women reporting to the Police and those women not reporting to the Police. More women chose not to report.

**No. Of Reports Made To The Police**

![Graph showing number of reports made by interviewees](image)

Most of the women either did not report incidents of abuse to the Police at all, or did so once only. Only 2 of the 10 women made more than one report to the Police.
Almost all of the families of the victims were aware of the violence. Only one victim's family was unaware of the situation.
Few of the women had not approached any organisation for help. Those that did so approached Women's Aid.

**Reasons For Not Approaching Bodies**

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<tr>
<th>Number of women</th>
<th>Not aware of any support available</th>
<th>Aware of support through Police</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
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<td>7</td>
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Most of the women (80%) were unaware of help available from support agencies. Only two were aware of the support they could get. They learned of this through their contact with the Police.
How Many Women Needed Medical Treatment

A high proportion of the women (70%) needed medical treatment as a result of abuse.

No. Of Times Required Treatments

Most women (70%) needed no or only one medical visit. The remaining 3 women needed 4 or 5 visits each.
Most of the abusers were considered normal and only two abusers drank alcohol. None of the abusers was thought to have psychiatric problems.
All of the women had considered leaving their abusive partner.

**Number Of Women Leaving**

Most of the women (80%) had not left their abusive partner. Only two of the ten women had left.

**Reasons For Not Leaving**
All ten women had considered the same reasons for not leaving their abusive partner, including the two who did eventually leave.

**Self-completion questionnaires from Asian women victims**

**Ages Of Abused Asian Women In Hostels**

Abused Asian women living in hostels were aged between 16-55. The results show that there are more women in the mid twenties, and again in the mid to late forties.
Marital Status Of Asian Women

\[
\frac{3}{4} \text{ of women were still married - a high proportion. Only } \frac{1}{4} \text{ were separated or single.}
\]

None were divorced.

Religion Of Abused Asian Women

Both Hindus and Muslims were well represented, showing that abuse is not restricted to one culture. There were more Muslims than Hindus in this sample.
The questionnaires revealed that almost all cases of abuse involved the husband, usually on his own but frequently also involving his family.

All the Asian women in the hostels had suffered abuse - physical, violent, verbal.
threatening and emotional. Two women had also experienced other abuse either sexual or blackmail.

Some Asian women had suffered abuse for many years. Patterns show abuse more prevalent in the first ten years or after thirty years of marriage.
Have The Police Been Involved?

45 women said they had not involved the Police. The remaining 15 had involved the Police.

Families Who Are Aware Of Violence
Two thirds of the women’s own families were aware of the violence being suffered. In the remaining cases the women’s cousins were aware although the immediate family might not have been.

**Bodies Which Women Approached For Help**

Most of the women had approached Women’s Aid, with a slightly smaller number approaching Asian Refuge. An even smaller number had approached Victim Support.
How Many Women Needed Medical Treatment

22 women had required medical treatment as a result of domestic violence. This low proportion might be caused by non-reporting.

State Of Mind Of The Abuser

Abusers committing these acts of violence were generally considered to be in a normal state of mind.
All the women had considered leaving their abusive partner and all had in fact left.

Women had different reasons for prolonging an abusive relationship. The most influential factors were family pressure, children and community pressure.
In-depth analysis from semi-structured interviews with Asian women victims

It was essential to make the interviewees anonymous so that there would be no danger of recrimination from the abuser. This enabled them to answer freely and fully. The interviewees are referred to by number, for example, interviewee one is denoted as 1.

The Perpetrators of the abuse

The ten Asian women interviewed all stated that they had been violently abused by their husband or their husband’s family. One or both of these were the perpetrators of the domestic violence. 1 stated “the person who is violent to me is my husband and his family. His sister is also involved and often causes the fights.” 4 also stated that her husband and his family had abused her. 6, like 1 and 4, experienced abuse both by her husband and his family, particularly her mother-in-law. 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 had all experienced violent abuse solely by their husband.

Forms of abuse

All the women confirmed that they had been physically, verbally, emotionally, abused, threatened and controlled. Some of the interviews revealed examples of extremes of violent behaviour. 6 claimed that she had been raped by her brother-in-law. 1 stated that her husband had stripped her naked in front of their children. Her husband’s sister
had been present at the time and had done nothing to stop the abuse. “She just watched” while he forcibly stripped her naked. 2 stated that her husband controlled her and physically abused her. She could not confide in him, say or do anything. If she tried to tell him anything he said, “don’t teach me you woman.” 3 stated that her husband controls her and gets angry. He slaps her if she says anything. She also felt that he abused her because “he embarrasses me in front of people.” 4 was controlled and physically abused. She stated “I was taught not to talk above my husband so I didn’t.” In a more extreme example of domestic violence, 5 stated that her husband threw chemicals all over her face, and “once, he set fire to the house when I was asleep.” 6 stated that her husband sexually abused her. “He strangled me once, his brother raped me once. It was really bad. They were all in it together.” 6 was abused from the time of her marriage. Her husband’s family wanted to get rid of her. She said “my mother-in-law wanted her niece from India. But my father-in-law chose me. He died before I came to England.” 7 confirmed that her husband emotionally blackmailed her. He says “even if I have ten children by him he will leave me. I stay because of the children.” He controls her and does not let her see her own family. 8 stated that her husband is alcoholic and even if he is not drunk, he still hits her. “He pulls my hair all the time, I lost my voice once because he trod on my neck.” Her husband had inflicted bruises on 9’s face. She said “afterwards, I did not open the door to anyone or go out, I even did not open the door to my own parents. She also said that her husband only
married her to come to England and get a red passport, adding “He only thinks of me as a dog or worse.” 10 said that her husband hits her a lot and in the past he used to force her out of the house. “He tried to stab me more than once.” On one occasion her husband forcibly cut her hair and told his family that she had accidentally set fire to her hair. They just laughed about it. She said that her husband is an alcoholic who, even when sober, still controls her and violently abuses her. She believed her husband did it because “I have a disabled son. He wanted more sons instead of daughters. He does not respect me. He always bullies me. I hate him. I want to divorce him now. He damaged my life. He says what’s the point of having me, I’m not worth it any more. He embarrasses me in front of people, especially his family, and laughs. He wants money, he wants control. At first I did not leave him because the house was in his name. But now I have put my name on the deeds. I’ve worked so hard for this house. I raised my disabled son, who is 26 years old, without help from my husband. He does not like my children and he also bullies them.”

**Period of suffering abuse**

Most of the interviewees have been living with their husbands for many years. The younger women have been married for a relatively short time, the middle-aged women and older women for much longer periods. 1, 2 and 7 have lived with the abuser for a few years. 3, 5, 8, and 9 have been living in an abusive relationship for a number of
years. 4 and 10 have lived with their abusers for many, many years. 4 is a widow who suffered abuse for forty-five years from her husband and his family. She said “I suffered abuse for 45 years. And now the man is dead after causing damage to my life. I still live with the memory. 10 has been in a violent relationship for thirty-one years.

**Involvement of Police and reasons for not reporting to them**

Many Asian women do not report violent abuse by their husband or his family because it is seen as a shameful thing to do. It causes problems for the woman who does report to the police, because even her own family will feel ashamed. As a result, many women feel pressured by their families not to report to the Police or talk to anyone about their problems. If they did so they would be stigmatized for it. Women who do not understand English (a majority of those interviewed) are unable to go to anyone outside of the community for help. Women who do report on their husband’s or his family’s abuse find themselves being victimised even more when they go back to the abusers. Some women who have reported to the police, have done so a number of times.

I, who does not understand English, reported to the Police about her husband’s physical abuse. “One day when he hit me I called the Police, they came and arrested him. I didn’t understand English I just said; “My husband is hitting me.” 2 stated that
she did not tell anyone about her problems, not even the police, the reason being that “you should not do that, it’s shameful to report, that’s what my Mum says.” 3 had not involved the Police. If she did, “people would say bad things about me.” Similarly, 4 thought that “it is a shameful situation if you report your husband.” 6 reported her husband once but then went back to him. “I involved the Police once. They helped, but I went back, thinking he would be all right. But it got worse after reporting him. It was shameful for his family.” 7 had not reported her problems to the police. 8 had reported to the Police about five times, but her husband still comes back and starts hitting her. 9 stated that she had not involved the police because her parents told her not to do so. Her parents say, “what would people say? Everybody in the Bangladeshi community will start talking.” 10 had not approached the police for help. Instead she had taken out an injunction against her husband some years ago. Her husband did leave the house but she let him back in some months later and again he started hitting her. “After the injunction it got worse.”

**Family members who are aware of the problems**

The Asian victims of abuse when interviewed, confirmed that their own families were aware of their problems. Some family members had tried to help them but had failed. Most of the interviewees’ families were not living in England. They were back home, abroad. One interviewee had not told her family back home about her situation because
"they will worry." Most of these women have faced family pressure not to seek support. Rather they have been pressured to stay with their abusers, to be patient and to live with the abuse because, once divorced, they won't be able to re-marry.

I said that her husband's family were aware of the problems but did nothing about it. Her own family also knew "My brother knows, he helps all the time, but my husband will not change." 2 said that her family lived in Bangladesh and were aware of her problems, but she did not have anyone in England apart from her husband's family. 3 said that her family too, were aware and that they just said "be patient, God will help." 4’s family have tried to help but have not succeeded. She said "I still have to live with him." 5’s family were abroad and were worried all the time about her. The community did not help at all. They said "stay with him." 6 had not told her family abroad because they would just worry about her. 7’s family was also abroad as was her husband’s family. 8 had brothers and sisters who were aware. They always told her to leave her husband but so far she hadn't. She declared "Now I will." 9 said that both her family and the community had tried to help, but her husband still abused her. 10’s family members were abroad and were aware and worried all the time. She said, "my mother and father died some time ago in Bangladesh after I came to this country. They knew my problems and were heart broken. My mother wanted to see me but couldn't and I could not go there because of my disabled son. My husband wouldn't look after him. He said to me: if you want to go, go one way."
Agencies approached for help and reasons for not approaching them

Many of the women interviewed stated that they had not approached any support agency such as Women’s Aid, Victim Support or Women’s Refuge. This was mainly because they were not aware of the availability of support for women in domestic violence situations. An important factor was that they did not understand English. In addition, they were worried about being called names by the community. They were only aware that the Police can sometimes help. Women who had approached other bodies for help had been referred to them by the police after making complaints of domestic violence.

I was referred to Women’s Aid by the police, otherwise she would not have known that there were any bodies offering support for women. 2 said that she did not understand English and did not know who to ask for help. 3 did not know of any places of help apart from the Police. 4 had never approached anyone for help. 5 had only approached the police for support. 6 went to Women’s Aid for support through the police and felt that the refuge had helped her a lot. 7 did not know where to go for support and stated that “there is no point, I have two children.” 8 also was not aware of support. 9 too, did not know of any kind of support for women apart from the Police. 10 had not approached any bodies for help apart from taking out an injunction against her
husband.

**Medical treatment required and frequency**

Some of these women had required medical treatment a number of times. Some had not gone to their GP just in case the doctor reported the violence to the police or in case the Asian community got to know about their problems. The few women who did seek medical assistance from their doctor made up stories about their injuries or bruises. Women who stated that they had not required medical assistance may not have gone to the doctor's and may simply have hidden their bruises without confiding in anyone.

1 required an eye operation because her husband smacked her hard on her eyes. 2 required medical assistance after her violent husband abused her. When she went to the doctor's she said that she “tripped over.” 3 had not required medical assistance as a result of domestic violence. 4 needed medical treatment once when her husband kicked her on her stomach. “I was pregnant, I was bleeding.” 5 required medical assistance on two occasions. “He burnt my face with chemicals. He also bruised my face.” 6 has not required medical treatment. 7 was taking anti-depression tablets due to domestic violence. 8 had required medical assistance five times. “He broke my arms and legs and trod on my neck.” 9 had been hurt a number of times but she did not go to the doctor’s. “I don’t go to the doctor’s in case they report it to the police.” 10 had had her nose...
broken and required treatment in hospital. The abuse had affected her emotionally

"Now I am on anti-depression tablets."

**State of mind of the abusers**

Many of those interviewed said that their husband or husband's family were in a normal state of mind when they were being abusive. Two women stated that their husbands were mostly drunk when abusing them, though even when they were not drunk, they still used violence against them.

1, 2, 3 and 4 considered their husband or his family to be in a normal state of mind at the time of the abusive behaviour. 5's husband was felt to be in normal health, but she was clear that her husband disliked her because “I had one daughter and I could not have any more children.” 6, 7 and 9's abusers were also judged to be in a normal state. The husbands of 8 and 10 were alcoholic. 10's husband was still abusive even when he was not drinking. She said “He wants money from me, and he wants to go Bangladesh and re-marry. He only uses me for money. Even if he has not been drinking he still shouts and tries to control me.”

**Thoughts of leaving and reasons for not doing so**

It was clear that many of the women had had thoughts of leaving. A number of reasons
were given for not doing so. The reasons were family pressure, what the community would say, or who would re-marry them. They stayed for the sake of the children or they had got used to violence and now found it hard to leave their husbands. They had no money of their own with which to support themselves and their children. They had no experience of work outside the home. Most of the interviewees did not understand English and lacked support because the majority of their families were abroad.

I had thought of leaving her husband. She had left her husband once but came back to him and he continued to hit her. She did not leave because she had children and they needed a father. She also felt that “no one else will marry me and I don’t have any money as well.” 2 had thoughts of leaving but had not done so because, she said, “where would I go? I don’t have any relatives, or any money and I don’t understand English.” 3 had thought of leaving, but couldn’t because of the children. She said, “no one will take on a woman who is divorced with children. If I did leave, they would call me names.” 4 did leave her husband once but went back to him. She stayed because of her children and because of family pressure. 5 had not left her husband earlier because she had no money, no family, or anyone in the community who would take her in. She said “I’ve now left because it was too much to take.” 6 had left her husband after many years of violence. She stated that “there’s no point in staying.” 7’s husband had left her but had come back. She felt like leaving him but said, “I’ve got used to it, also I
don’t have any money to support myself and my children.” 8 said that she would leave him now and had told her husband to leave her alone. She stated “I’ve had enough of being kicked around. I will enjoy life now with my children.” 9 had thought of leaving her husband but had not done so because “Muslim girls are only supposed to marry once. I have been taught to respect my husband, but he does not respect me.” 10 had not left her husband during thirty-one years of marriage because of her children, especially her disabled son, and also because of what the community would say. She stated “I will now, I’ve had enough of him.”

Support organisations

This section looks at support organisations interviewed and gives an account of the kind of service and support they provide for women and children who are facing domestic violence in Leicestershire.

Leicestershire Police Service Victim Liaison Officer

The officer said that the Police take domestic violence extremely seriously and help victims of domestic abuse. They have powers to arrest the perpetrators with the help of the victims. A Victim Liaison Officer is a specialist skilled in dealing with domestic violence issues, child abuse, race issues and people in other vulnerable situations. Victims can talk to a Victim Liaison Officer who can help and support them, frequently
providing access to a safe refuge. All Police stations around the country have an experienced Victim Liaison Officer. The aims of the Victim Liaison Officer are to support and protect the victim, to remove the perpetrator or the victim from further victimisation, to offer reassurance and to investigate the criminal offence. Legal protection is also given to victims.

The Victim Liaison Officer based at Loughborough Police Station stated that common forms of domestic violence are verbal abuse, putting the victims down, calling them names and making them feel worthless so they lose self-confidence, physically assaulting them and damaging them emotionally. The Police in Leicestershire deal with nearly 10,000 domestic violence incidents a year. “In the North Area which is what I cover, which is North West Leicestershire, Charnwood and South Charnwood as well as Syston, we have two and a half thousand incidents reported to us a year.” The Victim Liaison Officer’s responsibilities are to do a risk assessment and safety assessment. The perpetrator will be arrested and warned to stop the violence. If necessary they will be locked up in prison. The main aims are to “focus on the risk assessment, removing the perpetrator and making the victim physically safe.”

Many kinds of protection are given to victims of domestic violence. The Victim Liaison Officer can remove the perpetrator from their property and give them bail.
conditions via the court. "We have alarm systems that we can put into properties so that they can be activated if the abuser goes back, we have mobile phones that are available to victims." They provide emotional support for victims and get the social services and other support organisations involved. Women who go back to the perpetrators and face more victimisation are never judged by the Victim Liaison Officer. "Each time a woman comes to us we treat it as the first time. There's no judgement in that, there's no 'I told you so'. I've been dealing with women - oh, some women I've been dealing with for twenty years who've still gone back to the same environment." Many women who go back to the abuser or drop charges against the abuser do it for their children because "children put tremendous pressure on Mums to have Dad back because they love him."

According to the Victim Liaison Officer a restraining and protection order is very useful because it gives the police powers to arrest a perpetrator. "a lot of people say, 'oh it's just a piece of paper' - it's not that. Number one, the, certainly, restraining order and civil orders - they can carry a power for the police to arrest the perpetrator if they breach them. It also shows the perpetrator 'there's a consequence to what you do. Because this order from the court is giving us a power to stop you.' Whereas without it, if it's not a criminal offence we would find it difficult to arrest."
Not many Asian women seek help from the Police in Leicestershire. The Officer said that for every fifty white women who go to them for help, only one or two women from the Asian communities do so. She stated “It’s less than it should be per head of population. This might be because “we’re a white, predominantly white organisation. There are cultural issues of women leaving their family unit and in other cultures it’s seen as a failure and that you shouldn’t get the police involved because there’s great shame in that. There’s language barriers, there’s many, many barriers to it.” The officer also said that there are not many Asian women working in the Police force either. “I’d like to see a lot more Asian women within the Police Service as police officers. If you don’t have them as police officers you can’t have them specialising in what you do.” Many ethnic minority women were not aware of support although there are leaflets in different languages but “they’re only pieces of paper. It’s down to the representatives in their own organisations – me, Women’s Aid, Social Workers, Voluntary Agencies, to go to the different communities and tell them what we do.”

**Loughborough Women’s Aid Manager**

Women’s Aid provides women who are facing domestic violence and their children with a safe place to stay. They also provide outreach support, listening support, emotional support. Access to counselling, assistance with housing, legal support and access to education are also provided.
The consequences of domestic violence towards women and children are homelessness, psychological trauma and other mental health problems, even death. The manager of Women’s Aid in Loughborough stated that “if you’re living with domestic violence you could be ill, children could underachieve at school, the children can also overachieve at school because they could have a reverse reaction.” She also asserted that domestic violence against women and children in Leicestershire is “very common, very common.”

Loughborough Women’s Refuge is small with secure accommodation for only four or five families. Unlike the Police Liaison Officer, the manager took a poor view of restraining and protection orders which she felt do not work for some offenders. “There’s a book titled ‘Not worth the paper it’s written on.’ I think for a certain type of man it might work. If you’ve not had lots of dealings with the police, and if it’s the first time, it might stop you. May be it will work for a small minority but not for others with a more criminal element. Waving a piece of paper saying ‘you can’t do this’ is not going to do a lot of good. It depends on the person.”

Women’s Aid has a small but steady number of Asian women coming to them for support. “We do get a steady number through. There would be around thirty during the
year.” She felt that there needs to be more awareness raising to enable Asian women to come forward. Women’s Aid is looking at the issue of doing more to increase awareness. “I’m looking at it again, there’s different initiatives from different groups and different organisations. That is an issue that we need to be looking at and that’s why it’s more close to me at the moment.”

**Loughborough Women’s Aid Outreach Worker**

An Outreach Worker for Women’s Aid Loughborough confirmed that Leicestershire has a high rate of domestic violence. The Outreach Worker’s main role is to support those who have left or are still living with their abuser. They meet in the victim’s home or a place convenient to them. This might be outside Loughborough if the women are in hiding from the perpetrator. Women who don’t leave their abusers are given emotional support. The Outreach Worker also accompanies women to places such as the solicitor’s or the council offices when they want to look for a house. The Outreach Worker does have some Asian women who ask for support but “I wouldn’t say it makes up a high percentage of our service users, although I would like to see a change.” She is very aware that Asian women do not come forward for help “It’s all very hush-hush and it’s very tight-knit. I think the women who are experiencing it are very keen not to let it leak out. We know it’s going on but we’re just not seeing them.” The Outreach Worker also stated that not many Asian women are aware of support “I would push the
boat out and say probably not." She felt that more needs to be done so that women can come forward. This might be achieved by talking to ex-service users and women victims who might be able to tell support organisations how best to approach Asian women sensitively.

**Domestic Violence Awareness Co-ordinator For Charnwood**

The Domestic Violence Awareness Co-ordinator’s objectives are to promote and raise awareness of domestic violence locally and to promote non-violence through education. Their remit is also to encourage all support agencies to examine their Domestic Violence policies and to provide information and give advice and help to victims and offenders. The main objectives are to “increase reporting of incidents through awareness raising and helping to reduce the repeat victimisation.” The Co-ordinator has a number of responsibilities such as providing information services to professionals and individuals. “I liaise with other agencies both directly and through Charnwood Domestic Violence Panel.” The awareness promoted does help some women to come forward if they are know that there is support. The Co-ordinator stated, “if women feel confident that somebody’s there to support them and help them, they’re more likely to come forward. They’re more likely to feel, if they’ve got support, that they’ve got strength. So if they feel that other people are aware of these issues, then they perhaps can talk to people more easily.”
**Loughborough Racial Equality Officer**

The role of the Racial Equality Officer is to provide confidential support and advice on race and cultural issues. She stated that domestic violence in Leicestershire is very common and “sometimes we receive phone calls in the middle of the night.” Her remit is to support women, particularly Asian women. They help with women’s needs. They give women a chance to decide what they want to do and then support them. For example “if they want to leave home, then we will help them physically to move and leave the home, and then we will provide a safe environment for them and for the children. Then we will see what benefits they are entitled to, we will help them to get benefits, and then we will give them time to make a decision if they want to leave their partner for good.” They have Asian women coming to them for help. “Asian women need more help and support than English women. Sometimes maybe it’s the language barriers, sometimes the cultural barriers. If the woman is a local then she has to be more careful, we have to be more careful for her safety and her needs.” In her view, the majority of Asian women who face domestic violence continue to stay with their abusers. They stay because Asian women from back home have been taught “now you are married, this is your everything, you have to live with it and you have to die there. So with that mentality, the poor woman can’t think anything else.”
Charnwood Borough Council Policy Officer And Community Safety Officer

The Policy and Community Safety Officers’ job is to increase the reporting of domestic violence in Charnwood. They stated that there is a lot more domestic violence going on “which is not being reported, particularly by the Asian women.” They were aware that more needs to be done to get more Asian women coming forward and reporting to the Police and that accessible information is needed. They saw the need to “target women in the right place at the right time. We need to be aware of the big cultural differences between Indian women and Bangladeshi women and perhaps women from Somalia, Iran and Iraq. We need to think long and hard about how we’re going to reach these women to target them properly. We need to rethink, what we have been doing, because obviously it’s not working. And if it’s not working, why isn’t it working?”

In their opinion, more women should report domestic violence for the sake of their safety and their children’s safety. “There is a lot of support and help available for women and children who are facing domestic violence here in Leicestershire. We’d like to see more reporting and I think another thing we have to think about, and I’m sure the Police will agree is, when crimes are reported, they’ve got to be followed through, and I think that again is something that I know the police are working on with their domestic violence co-ordinators. It’s to give the support to women so that men can be brought to justice if needs be. Because too many times a report is made, then it’s
withdrawn because of fear or because the husband’s promised not to do it again. We’ve got to, you know, make people feel more confident that if they do ask for help, they will get it.”

The Policy Officer and the Safety officer both thought that the strategy for awareness raising needs to be rethought so as to make things better for women, particularly Asian women. I was able to give them information about Asian women and how Asian culture operates. During the interview it became apparent that they knew surprisingly little about Asian communities. I suggested ideas about how best to approach Asian women victims of domestic violence. I put forward the idea of raising awareness through the Asian radio channels. My contribution helped them to recognise the need to rethink their way of working. “Having had our conversation with you we need to rethink the strategy and also it’s been very useful meeting you. You’ve given us food for thought, thank you.” Subsequently they said they would like to arrange a meeting with other support agencies when issues of awareness raising within the Asian women’s community will be discussed with input from me.

**Loughborough Victim Support Manager**

Victim Support is an independent, charitable organisation which offers victims of crime free, confidential and emotional support. It also provides legal and practical
assistance to victims or to those who are attending court as witnesses to a crime.

According to the manager they are a non-judgmental organisation. They offer victims of domestic violence emotional support, listening to them and helping them deal with their fears. In addition, "we can also give them practical information, sign-posting them towards other agencies if we feel that other agencies are in a better position to be able to give them the support they're looking for. For example, that might be Women’s Aid, it might be the Refuge it might be the Family Service Unit who work with children who have experienced domestic violence in the home. We also run, in the courts throughout England and Wales, the Victim Support Witness Service which will support witnesses who come to court to give evidence." Victim Support also helps women who have been injured as result of domestic violence to get compensation through the Criminal Compensation Authority.

Victim Support is a totally confidential organisation, they do not give out any names or addresses of the victim to anybody else without the victim’s permission. The manager said "Support that is offered by volunteer support workers, that remains confidential between the victim and the worker unless there are issues that obviously need to be raised with myself as the manager. If we do refer on to a third agency that is always with the permission of the victim. So confidentiality first of all, is the main protection
that we’re going to give. We have sometimes used coffee lounges in supermarkets for example, or our support is pre-arranged via telephone contact. We set an appointment time where the victim knows that they’re going to be a safe time for us to call. So over and above all else we base it on confidentiality, making sure that the victim is kept safe and also that my workers are kept safe.” She viewed restraining orders or protection orders as useful but limited. They are useful because they can help the victim and stop the circle of domestic violence. If an injunction is broken then the Police can intervene and can make an arrest and the abuser can be charged or taken to prison. The manager added that “however, some perpetrators may well feel that it’s worth taking the risk, so it’s not a cast iron protection, but as far as I am aware it’s the best available deterrent in the Criminal Justice system at this time.”

Victim Support do have Asian women coming to them for support but infrequently. There have been a few cases were Asian women have required help. “If I put it in these terms, that it’s generally the more westernised Asian women rather than women who are still living strictly within culture.” The experience of Victim Support regarding Asian women is that the community is still “largely a closed community, it’s seen as degrading, it’s seen as disloyal, it can be seen as being detrimental to the perpetrator and therefore dangerous really for the woman to actually come outside the community and ask for help.”
Social Worker At Social Services In Loughborough

Social Services offers advice and protection for women with children who are facing domestic violence. Social Services only deal with cases of domestic violence where children are involved. Cases are referred by the Police. Very few women come to them directly, it is mostly via the police. Where there are cases of domestic violence Social Services do offer women and children support but also refer them to other agencies who could provide more help. The Social Worker said that there are "long-term effects on children who experience parents who are having quite a violent relationship." Not many Asian women go to Social Services for support "there is a reluctance, Asian women may be afraid or might feel stigmatised."

Charnwood Borough Council – Housing Officer

Charnwood Borough Council, Housing department assists victims of domestic violence by providing temporary accommodation, and offers support and advice regarding housing. Temporary accommodation is provided to victims of domestic violence within twenty-four hours. Many women who do not want a house near to the perpetrator are offered accommodation in another town or county. There are many housing contacts around the country for their safety. A house is chosen at one of these locations. The Housing Officer felt that domestic violence is more common than is reported. Many women do not report violence because their marriage relationship will
be jeopardised and their family are not very understanding and supportive. The Council also puts victims in touch with a Victim Liaison Officer, Women’s Aid and other refuges. Charnwood Borough Council would like to see more women coming forward for housing options. The Council does have a small number of Asian women coming to them regarding long term or short term housing solutions but “Asian women are still behind, not many are coming forward, more help is available.”

A Loughborough GP

A Loughborough GP confirmed that the most common forms of domestic violence against women are psychological and physical violence. Most of the problems affecting Asian women are “hidden and delayed.” Most of the families are aware of the problems. Most Asian women will not confide in a male doctor “Many Asian women prefer female doctors.” According to him, the consequences of domestic violence are “physical injuries, delayed trauma, panic, depression, leading to post-traumatic stress disorder.” Doctors will refer victims to the Social Services and the Police, with their permission. Women can also be referred to a counsellor through their GP. The doctor added that “some women receive treatment and are also assisted by psychotic drugs.”

Loughborough Job Centre

Loughborough Job Centre helps lone victims who want financial help for themselves
and their children. Each case is looked at individually according to their needs. All are advised about benefits which they can claim. A financial adviser, who checks details of the claim and a Lone Parent adviser will help and give advice. Their information is kept confidentially. No information is given out to organisations or individuals. The Job Centre also stated that “in cases where it would seem to be in the best interest of the customer, we would advise them to contact Social Services, and the Police. We would not make any referral ourselves, nor pass on any information without the permission of the individual.”

My research interviews have shown that there are many support organisations whose aim is to help victims of domestic violence in Leicestershire. These organisations offer a variety of assistance and advice for women and their children. They are all aware however, that many Asian women victims are not seeking help and are continuing to live in abusive relationships for many years without support. They know too, that more awareness needs to be raised sensitively within Asian women’s circles about what kinds of help can be accessed. It became clear in the course of interviewing that, unfortunately, very few of the organisations are fully aware of how the Asian community operates and know relatively little about Asian culture. All support organisations who participated in the research would like to see more Asian women coming forward to seek help but need to find appropriate ways of doing so.
There are more conclusions to be drawn from the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires results contributed to by Asian women victims of domestic violence, and likewise from the interviews with support organisations. The overarching findings from these interviews will be discussed in the final conclusion of this dissertation.
CHAPTER 4

SECONDARY DATA FINDINGS

This chapter looks at secondary data on domestic violence against Asian women published by various organisations. It examines findings and statistics published in information booklets by support organisations in Leicestershire and further afield. Some of the information comes from a Women’s Refuge in Nottingham, some of the literature appears in UK police and government reports.

Domestic Violence Findings In Leicestershire

Research conducted by members of Charnwood Borough Council, Joe Adamson, Jeff Hardy and Robert Radburn “Charnwood Community Safety Partnership – Crime, Disorder & Drugs Audit 2004” states that domestic violence is a crime which is under-reported. They want to encourage reporting because “by increasing the level of reporting it will provide better understanding of the scale and nature of the problem.”

(Adamson et al, 2004: 25)

Using Police records on domestic violence the researchers found that there was a huge...
increase in domestic violence from 2001/02 to 2002/03. The number of domestic violence incidents then reduced again in 2003/04, but only very steadily. In Leicestershire, incidents of domestic violence were mainly reported and recorded on Fridays or Saturdays. The timing of the incidents was mainly between 10pm and 2am. (Adamson et al, 2004: 25)

Charnwood Borough officers also found that there are more women victims of domestic violence than men and also that 19 percent of the woman are assaulted in their homes. In 2003 and 2004, 94 percent of the victims were female. (Adamson et al, 2004: 26-27) During 2003 and 2004 most of the victims were aged between twenty-five and thirty four years of age. The majority of victims were also white. Fifty six percent of the victims had children. It could not be identified whether twenty eight victims had children or not and “in just 16% of cases there were no children involved.” (Adamson et al, 2004: 28)

In Leicestershire forty four percent of domestic violence cases were reported to the police and “41% were not reported and it was not known whether it had been reported to the police in 15% of the incidents.” (Adamson et al, 2004: 28)

Another paper, “Charnwood Community Safety Partnership – Crime And Disorder
Reduction Strategy 2005 – 2008" indicated that domestic violence incidents had increased over the last three years, “partly because there has been a drive to increase the reporting of domestic violence.” (Charnwood Borough Council, 2005: 7)

The main objective of Charnwood Borough Council is to “increase the reporting of domestic violence to the police by ten percent. And between 2007 and 2008 it is to target 1660 recorded incidents of domestic violence. They have also stated that they will “continue to support campaigns raising awareness around the issue of domestic violence”. (Charnwood Borough Council, 2005: 10)

A report produced by Crime and Disorder and Domestic Violence Research Assistant Nita Kanabar who works for Leicestershire County Council, entitled “Domestic Violence Common Monitoring Project 2004 – Quarter Four Summary January To March” found that the majority (90%) of the women victims seeking help between January and March 2004 were white. She makes the point that, because ethnic minorities don’t seek help, it does not mean that “domestic violence is not prevalent in other communities.” Kanabar concluded that this has a negative effect on service provision “for other ethnic minorities, this may mean that there is a gap in services in this area, which needs to be addressed.” (Kanabar, 2004: 2) Leicestershire County Council aims to “Create an increased awareness of services to ethnic minority groups,
give awareness to children, which can be done indirectly through education and can be incorporated in everyday learning” or directly through counselling and therapy services.” (Kanabar, 2004: 8)

A Leicestershire Constabulary report in 2004 “Response To And Investigation Of Incidents Of Domestic Violence” states that Leicestershire Constabulary “will take positive action to protect the victim and any children present from further harm when domestic violence occurs. Leicestershire Constabulary will also “work with partner agencies to help victims of domestic violence make a safe and informed choices.” (Leicestershire Constabulary, 2004: 1)

The report also states aims on what they will do to help victims and bring offenders to justice. Leicestershire Constabulary has outlined the following aims “To protect the victim, remove the risk of further attack, offer support and reassurance, fully investigate criminal offences, facilitate access to other agencies.” Moreover they will “Act positively in bringing the perpetrator to justice, where evidence allows, prevent further incidents of violence and help victims and protect the victim, thoroughly investigate all domestic violence incidents and take positive action to protect vulnerable persons, work in partnership with the Crown Prosecution Service and reassure and maintain contact with victims where appropriate and provide access to
other support agencies.” (Leicestershire Constabulary, 2004: 3) The report shows that approximately one-half of incidents are not being reported to the police. It asks why they are not reporting concluding that victims need to have faith in the police and the legal system and to feel that reported incidents will be taken seriously. Agencies should continue to work closely together “to provide a full service to victims.” (Leicestershire Constabulary, 2004: 8)

The Amazon Young Women’s project run by Leicestershire County Council have put together a collection of poems on domestic violence. The following is a telling example from this publication.

**Love Can Be Fake**

Domestic Violence ends up with pain,

Because people who do it repeat again.

(See Appendix 8 Leaflets from Support Organisations)
Leicester Women’s Aid Findings On Domestic Violence

The Leicester Women’s Aid “Annual Report 2003 - 2004” states its main as being to provide emergency accommodation for both women and children who face domestic violence. They also provide legal help, education and assist matters on health and welfare. They try to “encourage self help and empowerment, raise awareness of domestic violence both locally and nationally, challenge discrimination and oppression, work in co-operative teams.” (Leicester Women’s Aid Annual Report, 2003/04: 5)

Women’s Aid in Leicester have many Asian women and children victims, who face domestic violence, staying in the refuge. Through this support agency, many Asian women have rebuilt their lives and have had a lot of help. In the Annual Report there are personal stories told by Asian women who use the service. A forty five year old mother of five has been married to her violent husband for almost 25 years. She married her cousin from India. She states “The first month was great and we got on well. Soon everything started to change. We started to argue a lot and he would slap me. If I said anything back to him he would push me around. Throughout our marriage of 25 years he continued to behave in this way and he would be aggressive and violent towards me. The abuse reached a point where he began to abuse me sexually. He would demand sexual behavior from me which I was not comfortable with. I found it
distressing. I have left my husband three times. Each time he would find me and convince me that he had changed. I believed him but he did not keep his word. He would abuse me physically, sexually and emotionally. Throughout my marriage, I have had support from my family but only when it suited them. However, since arriving at Women’s Aid I have been able to talk about this for the first time. I never thought I would be in this situation but I could not take any more and had to get away from him.” The woman also states that the refuge has increased her confidence “coming to the refuge has helped me to deal with my experiences and look forward to the future. I have been here for a few months now and have started to rebuild my life.” (Leicester Women’s Aid Annual Report, 2003/04: 31-32)

Another woman stated that she had been in a violent relationship with her partner and while she was pregnant the violence got worse. She came here from another city after getting Leicester Women’s Aid number “I have been in Leicester refuge for seven weeks now, me and my beautiful daughter have never been happier or safer.” (Leicester Women’s Aid Annual Report, 2003/04: 33) Other women have given similar accounts of their experience of Leicester Women’s Aid. “Women’s Aid has helped me to make choices. Being in a refuge has given me time to think. Having other women around has made me feel safer at night.” (Leicester Women’s Aid Annual Report, 2003/04: 34) Another women expressed her appreciation for the help given by
Women' Aid “Thank you Women’s Aid for being there when I needed someone and for turning my life around into a positive experience. I couldn’t have done it without your help and support.” (Leicester Women’s Aid Annual Report, 2003/04: 39)

Many of the women who use Women’s Aid in Leicester are impressed by the helpfulness of the staff. Some of the comments are “staff are willing to help you whenever they can without judging you.” “I was given a lot of support regarding housing issues and also in relation to my daughter’s difficulties at school.” “No words can say how grateful I am for all the help, advice and support I have received. Thank you doesn’t seem enough.” (Leicester Women’s Aid Annual Report, 2003/04: 40)

Leicester Women’s Aid findings show that between 2002 and 2003 there was a decreases in women aged between 16-17, 31-40 and 51+. In 2004 there was a “significant increase in the number of women aged between 41-50.” This may mean that women who have been living with their abusers for many years are finally seeking help. The Leicester findings also show significantly that the “majority of the woman were white British.” (Leicester Women’s Aid Annual Report, 2003/04: 46)

Correspondingly, the majority of the children living in the refuge are white but the number of Asian children has also increased between 2003 and 2004. (Leicester Women’s Aid Annual Report, 2003/04: 51) There was also an increase with the
number of services which victims used in 2003-2004.” (Leicester Women’s Aid Annual Report, 2003/04: 55)

**Leicester Action On Domestic Violence**

The Leicester Action Team works with offenders who are violent to ensure no further harm is being perpetrated and to raise awareness about domestic violence. Leicester Action also acts “as a signposting agency, referring both partners and perpetrators to appropriate organisations.” (See Appendix 8 Leaflets from Support Organisations)

**Leicester Domestic Violence Help Line**

Leicester Domestic Violence Helpline is a telephone support service staffed by female workers and volunteers who can speak different languages. Victims who are facing domestic violence can ring the helpline number and will receive information such as “safety planning, and can be signposted to appropriate organisations and services.” (See Appendix 8 Leaflets from Support Organisations)

**Suraksha Project Leicester**

The Suraksha Project is an Asian women’s organisation based in Leicester which helps women who are in a violent situation. The project provides Asian women and their children with temporary accommodation and gives education advice for children.
Counseling support is also available together with legal assistance and other types of advice. Many of the staff speak different languages. Suraksha is a confidential and non-judgmental organisation. *(See Appendix 8 Leaflets from Support Organisations)*

**Panahghar Shanti**

Panahghar Shanti is also another support organisation specifically for Asian women and children who face domestic violence. The organisation is run by Asian women who work with Asian women victims of all ages. It also provides accommodation, support and legal advice. *(See Appendix 8 Leaflets from Support Organisations)*

**Roshni An Asian Women’s Refuge in Nottingham**

Roshni is a Refuge for South Asian Women and children facing domestic violence in Nottingham which provides refuge for women and children, ongoing emotional support, counseling and legal advice. One of its main aims, outlined in the “Annual Report 2003-2004 Roshni” is to empower women with or without children, who are experiencing domestic violence “to take control of their own lives”. It also recognises “the needs of children affected by violence.” *(Roshni Annual Report, 2003/04: 4)* It is included in this research because it makes some important points, not found in other Annual Reports.
In their Annual report, Roshni states that the ‘one- year rule’ for letting spouses stay in Britain, now changed by the government to ‘two-years’, is dangerous for victims and children in violent domestic relationships. It means that they will have to listen to abuse and suffer violence from their husbands for two years if they do not wish to be deported back to their country of origin. One of the workers states that “the ‘two-year rule’ for many women and their children will mean having to live in violent and potentially life threatening situations.” (Roshni Annual Report, 2003/04: 6) They also make the point that “Over the years the issue that some South Asian women and children are facing has not disappeared; violence and abuse continue, young women are forced into marriage, against their will, treated as sex workers, women are denied any social contact and violated, killing continues in the name of honour of the family which is still paramount.” (Roshni Annual Report, 2003/04: 6)

The following poem taken from the report expresses poignantly the experiences common to many Asian women living in abusive relationships.

VISION

2 Years the suffering continued

2 Years she told all

89
2 years we fought a battle
2 years we carried the “hassle”

Yet they could not hear
The words of a victim of abuse
A woman surviving
In a family so cruel and aloof

(Roshni Annual Report, 2003/04: 4)

The British Crime Survey 2004

Walby and Allen 2004, in their British Crime Survey found that more women face
domestic violence than men. The survey states that thirteen percent of women and nine
percent of men have been victims of domestic violence. There were 12.9 million
incidents of non-sexual acts of domestic violence against women and 2.5 million
against men. (Walby & Allen, 2004: vii). Their findings also show that many women
victims did not self-refer to support organizations “the main location for the
overwhelming proportion of women was to family and friends (90%), while some went
to a woman’s refuge (4%). After that, half of the women went back home to their
partner.” They discovered that many women stay in an abusive relationship because of
their children. “some people make a clean break from a violent partner, others do not
choose, or are not able, to do this. One reason for continued contact is the existence of children.” (Walby & Allen, 2004: 70) They state that although there is more help and support available for many victims of domestic violence, there are many reasons why women do not report to the police and do not seek help from organizations. If they do require help it will be through to their families and friends. They state that “there have been major transformation in recent years in the way that public services address domestic violence.” (Walby & Allen, 2004: 91) Despite this, the Home Office found that, even when domestic violence was reported to the police this did not necessarily lead to convictions. “Even when the police were informed about domestic violence, the cases rarely went to court.” (Walby & Allen, 2004: 97)

The secondary data findings clearly show that, in the Midlands, an increasing amount of help and advice is available to victims. Support organisations indicate that more white women victims are seeking help than previously. They are well aware that domestic violence occurs widely in the Asian community but the fact remains that women are not coming forward and reporting it. These organizations would like to see even more women reporting domestic violence. Equally the Criminal Justice System is anxious to help victims of abuse to seek justice but they cannot do so without the evidence that only the victims can provide. More detailed findings will be discussed at the end of this thesis.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The aim of the research was to find out more about domestic violence against Asian women in a geographically specific area of the UK. Leicestershire was chosen because its two major towns have high Asian populations. In the 2001 Census, Asians comprised 29.9% of the population of Leicester. In the Loughborough Ward in which I live, again according to the 2001 Census, the Asian population was 23.63% of the whole. It was hypothesized that there would be statistical evidence of domestic violence within this community and this, together with the possibility of contacting support agencies with an ethnic focus made this a viable research topic.

The research focused on a number of specific areas which included: discovering the forms of violence suffered; the identity of the abuser/s; the victims’ attitude towards the abuse and what influenced their reactions e.g. cultural upbringing. Two samples were taken. First a sample consisting of sixty victims who completed self completion questionnaires and second, a smaller number (ten) who agreed to be interviewed by the
author of this dissertation. The responses were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively to ascertain whether there were any patterns relating to the background of the victims, in terms of age, education or place of origin; the relationship between the victim and abuser; the personality of the abuser, whether other family members were involved either as abusers or as a means of support; and whether they had sought outside help. A further feature of the research was to examine the support organisations which might help the victims; what assistance the organisations could give; the extent of their awareness of the incidence of abuse within the Asian population and how much use the victims made of these support agencies. Eleven agencies were contacted. Of these, eight agreed to take part in a tape recorded interview and three gave written responses.

Methodology
The research was limited to Leicestershire and to a particular ethnic group, Asian women both Muslim and Hindu. This combination revealed some cultural and educational differences. In order to present a more rounded picture of the situation of the victims, two methods of investigation were used, questionnaires and semi-structure interviews. The questionnaires were given to sixty women living in three refuges, two in Leicester and for comparison, one in Nottingham. The size of the sample was chosen to give a wide range of responses and therefore a more reliable picture of the domestic abuse of women in the Asian community. The questionnaire was straightforward
enough for the women to understand, with a little extra help. It only took ten minutes to complete. This ensured that the women would be prepared to answer all the questions rather than lose interest and return incomplete questionnaires.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 Asian women from Loughborough. The author of this dissertation knew these people personally before undertaking the research. These interviews enabled questions to be explored in more depth which allowed further understanding of the issues. This was a relatively small sample. A much larger sample would have been preferable but because of the highly sensitive nature of the subject matter within Asian culture, it was not possible to persuade women who did not know the interviewer personally to share their experiences for research purposes. The concerns of the women had to be respected. These interviews with women went smoothly although at times some of the women were reluctant to go into detail on certain aspects. It was important to respect the limits that the women had drawn up and not to pry more deeply.

Using a tape recorder was helpful as it allowed the researcher to focus more on the woman being interviewed, to concentrate on their answers and how they could be developed so as to encourage the interviewees to give more detailed explanations. Afterwards it was possible to replay the tapes several times to make sure that written
translations were reliable. Each interview took between 10 and 20 minutes, which was a good length when discussing such an emotional subject. Despite the distressing nature of the interview especially the reliving of the domestic violence, the women were all glad to help with the research. They appreciated the opportunity to share their experiences so that other women could learn from them and might be more ready to seek help outside the community. As stated, the issue of domestic violence amongst Asian women is a very delicate one. It was important that the women should trust the researcher and be able to answer personal questions confidently. The researcher, being Asian, had a good knowledge and understanding of the cultural background, of the abused women. Her ability to speak Bengali and Hindi was vital in order for the interviewees to be able to respond fully and with confidence to the questions. Most of them had very little knowledge of the English language. Once translated, the questionnaire was straightforward to complete and easy to understand. The refuge workers in Leicester were also able to explain the questionnaire to them in their own language when necessary.

Semi-structured interviews were also undertaken with eleven organisations. The majority of organisations interviewed were Charnwood based as, being in my home town, they were more accessible. Secondary information was provided by organisations based in Leicester including the County Council. These sources gave a
very good representative picture of the County, since the majority of the Asian population is focused in Loughborough and Leicester. Loughborough is a small town with only one women’s refuge not particularly focused on Asian women. In Nottingham and Leicester, both large cities, there are several refuges particularly supporting Asian women. Many of the organisations interviewed in Loughborough also have branches in Leicester and Nottingham sharing the same ethos and method of working. Gaining the confidence of some of the Asian women’s organisations was a long process, requiring constant reassurance. One of the Leicester organisations approached did not co-operate with the research, feeling that their material was too confidential to be used in this way. The other Asian women’s refugees involved were interested in the research and made it a lot easier for the researcher to have access to the victims. They also gave advice and help regarding other organisations it would be useful to contact.

Literature Review & Primary Data Findings

In interviewing and in accessing Journal articles and literature reviews on domestic violence against Asian women victims, similar patterns were found regarding the abused women’s circumstances - how they felt towards the abuser (in most cases the husband), the conditions in which they lived, the cultural pressures, the types of abuse they endured and the barriers they faced to seeking help. In contrast to my own primary
data findings none of the literature reviewed mentioned the role of support organisations and which ones are available particularly to Asian women. This indicates that many of the organisations appear not to be addressing the needs of abused women in ethnic minority communities particularly finding ways of communicating what services they offer. Much more research is needed on the subject.

Primary Data & Secondary Data Findings

Primary and Secondary data findings indicate that support organisations are aware that domestic violence occurs within the Asian community. However, only a very few Asian women seek help. The findings also show that some organisations lacked knowledge and understanding about different cultures or how best to raise awareness amongst Asian women so that more of them will come forward to seek help. Statistics are available of the numbers of abused women supported by organisations and also information leaflets about their work. However, they are not widely distributed and not easily accessed within the Asian community. Although some of these are produced in a number of ethnic minority languages many Asian women particularly Bangladeshi are not literate even in their own language.

Patterns

Within both samples the patterns of experience of abuse were similar. The majority of
the women were in the twenty to mid-late forties age range. Most were still married. This may be because, in the Asian community, divorce is seen as a shameful thing and no matter what, you have to stay with your husband. Most of the participants saw divorce as a stigma. In all cases the husband was the principal abuser, in roughly a third of the samples the husbands family had also been violent. Most of the victims had suffered abuse all the way through the marriage between 4 and 40+ years. Forms of abuse were also very alike. The majority of women had suffered either all or most of the following forms of domestic violence: physical, verbal, emotional, control and threats. Both samples show that few women had reported the abuse to the police. Reasons for not doing so were commonly held - stigmatization by the community, family pressure and the fear that they would be no longer marriageable. In nearly every case the woman's family was living abroad. They were aware of the violence and worried but unable to help. Relatives in this country stressed the shame aspects of going public. Community criticism could decrease as succeeding generations become less culture bound. In the cities there was more awareness of Women’s Aid and of the Asian refuges. In Loughborough eighty percent of the participants had not heard of any agencies other than the Police. This might be because the majority of Bengali women in Loughborough come from very rural areas to this country and do not have much education and very little English. Most of the women had sought medical treatment. It is likely that others were too ashamed or too frightened to go to the doctor's for fear of
the community finding out or the GP reporting to the police.

A very high proportion of the women stated that their husbands were in a normal state of mind. Both samples had thought of leaving their abusers and the participants in the questionnaire sample had in fact left. Common reasons for not leaving were community pressure, family pressure, children, lack of money and inability to earn a living.

There were very few differences in the women’s responses. A few women only had suffered sexual abuse or emotional blackmail. Very few victims were divorced and a relatively small number of the samples were separated. The women who took part in the semi-structured interviews had not yet left the abusive relationship, though one or two declared their intention to leave. This might be again because of their rural background and lack of both education and English. Another difference was between the Hindu and Muslim cultures. The Hindu women were more confident in going out to work and in speaking English.

**Organisations**

Many support organisations in Leicestershire and one in Nottingham give practical advice and support to victims of domestic violence. Organisations are well aware that domestic violence has a long-term psychological effect on victims and their children.
They also know that women in all cultures suffer domestic violence. They are clear that within the Asian community women do not report the abuse. Agencies interviewed were also aware that strategies are needed to raise awareness within this population. Asian women victims need to be addressed in a different way because of both cultural and language difficulties. Analysis of data collected from support organisations indicate limited experience in dealing with domestic violence within the Asian community. Ways need to be found to encourage and support Asian women to speak out about their ordeal so as to enable support agencies to help them. Education and accessible information will help to destroy myths, prejudices and secrecy.

Thoughts For the future

As stated, support organisations need to understand more about different cultures so that they can approach Asian women in the right way and learn the most effective methods to inform the community about domestic violence. Progress could be made via Asian radio stations and encouragement could be given to second generation Asians who speak English to work within support organisations. It would also be helpful for such agencies to understand the cultural background, particularly why Asian women are encouraged by the community to remain with their abusive husbands. It is hoped that the awareness raised will result in a reduction in abuse as more victims become aware of the support organisations and make more use of their services. It is
encouraging that the Criminal Justice system is becoming more and more concerned to target domestic violence and that society in general is less tolerant of this abusive behavior than it was in the past.
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